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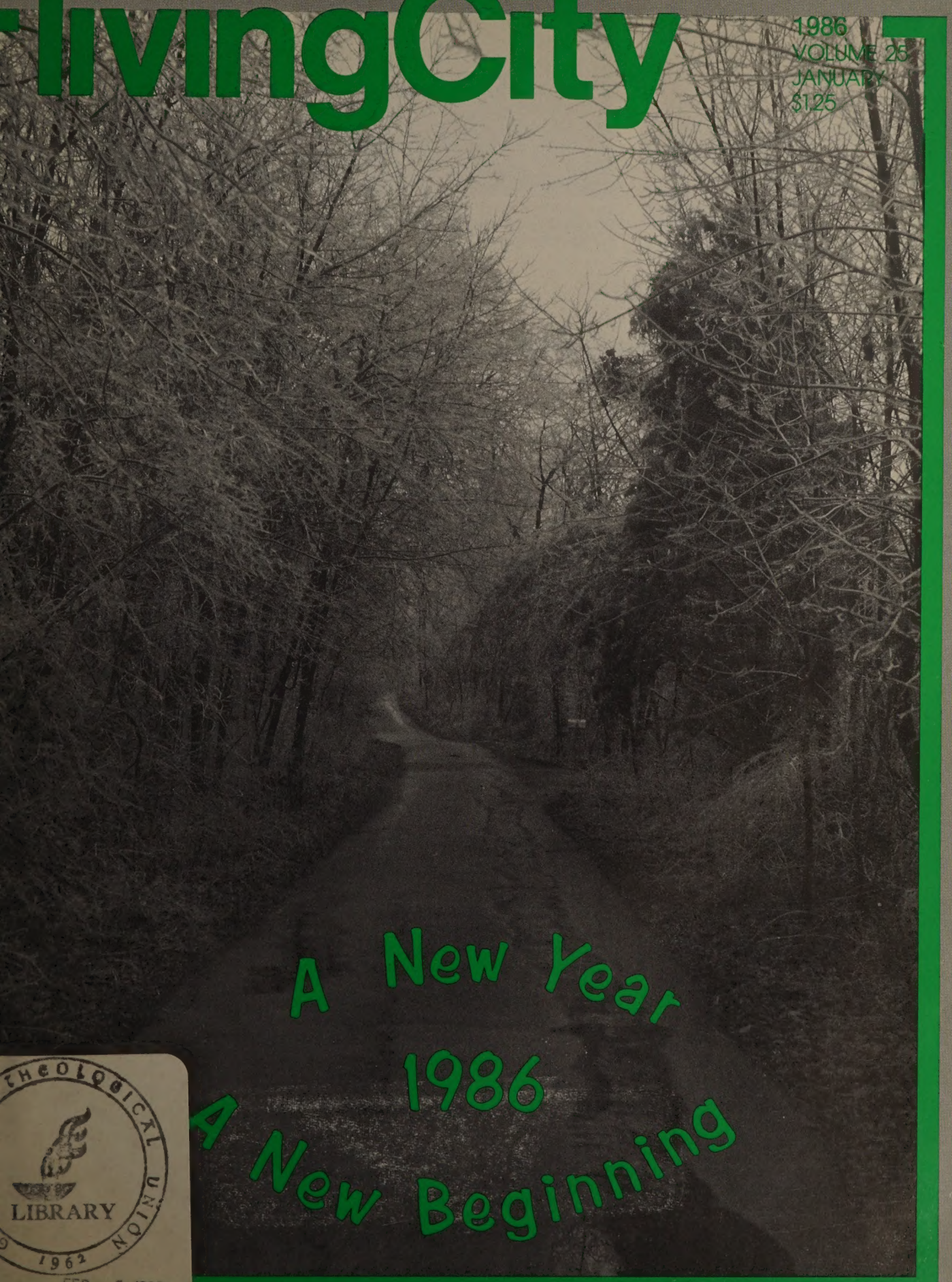

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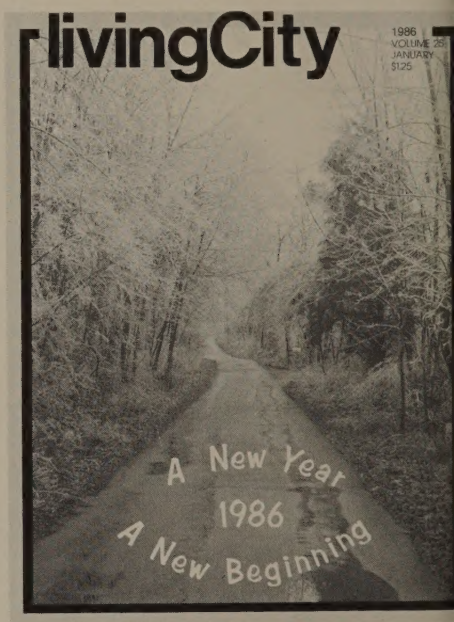

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Setting the compass

As the new year begins we would like to offer our readers a thought that Chiara Lubich founder of the Focolare Movement shared with a group of focolarini at the beginning of a new year.

In the past I've pointed out that the call to follow Jesus Crucified and Forsaken[1] exclusively, did not simply take place once and for all at the beginning of the Focolare. From time to time, down through the years, the Lord has reinforced that call through particular episodes or intuitions. What follows happened to me in 1954. It is an episode some of you know about already but one that is useful to recall.

1954 was an important year for us: for the first time a *focolarino*[2] was going to become a priest. I had to go from Rome to Trent for the ordination of Father Foresi by the Archbishop of Trent. Not being well, it seemed wise to travel most of the way by plane. As soon as I stepped aboard, a very kind stewardess—wishing to make the trip easier for me—invited me into the cockpit. There I was immediately struck by the magnificent view, wide and unobstructed, offered by the large cockpit windows. It was not the panorama, however, which struck me the most, but rather the brief explanation that the pilot gave me as to what is important in flying an airplane. He told me that if you want to have a straight, sure flight, first of all you must set the needle of your compass in the direction of your destination. Then, all along the way, you must keep an eye on it to make sure that the plane does not go off course.

As I was listening to this explanation, I immediately began to make a mental comparison between an airplane trip and the journey of life, which today I would refer to as the Holy Journey. It seemed to me that in life, too, we had to set our "compass," at the outset, in the direction our soul was to follow—which is Jesus Forsaken. Then, all along the journey, we had to do only one thing: remain faithful to Him.

Yes. The way which God calls us to follow is this, and this alone: to love Jesus Forsaken in every moment. This means embracing all the sufferings in

our own life. It means putting love into practice, by always adhering to his will; doing away with our will, so as to let his will prevail. To love Jesus Forsaken means to discover what true love is, to learn what it means to love our neighbors—that is, to love them to the point of being forsaken, as he did. To love Jesus Forsaken in every moment, means to practice all the virtues, which he did heroically in that moment, for all to see.

Now that the old year is drawing to a close and a new one is beginning it would seem to be a good moment to ask ourselves, "How far have we gotten in our Journey?" We felt a very strong desire not to waste any more time. I think I can say that setting the needle of our spiritual compass in the direction of Jesus Forsaken is the best possible step we could take to assure the continuation and completion of our Holy Journey; and it will make our Journey easier, as well.

On that plane, I had noticed that the pilot was very free in his movements, because he used no reins, as you would need with a horse; nor steering wheel, as you would need in a car. Similarly, if we set the needle of our spiritual compass in the direction of Jesus Forsaken, we too will not need anything else to reach the goal safely. Just as in a plane there are no curves to take you by surprise, because you fly in a straight line; and you don't have the problem of mountains, because you quickly reach a good altitude; so too, in our Holy Journey, our love for Jesus Forsaken immediately places us at a good altitude. Thus we are not frightened by unforeseen circumstances, nor tired out by climbing; because in Jesus Forsaken, whatever is unforeseen, difficult, or painful has already been foreseen, and has become what we are waiting for.

Let's set our compass on Jesus Forsaken; and then let's remain faithful to him. How? In the morning, as soon as we wake up, let's point the needle of our compass toward Jesus Forsaken saying "Here I am!" Then, during the day, from time to time, let's check our compass and see if we're still on course with Jesus Forsaken. If we find we're not, then, with another "Here I am!" let's get back on the right course, and we will be able to continue our Journey.

If we travel life's journey in the company of Jesus Forsaken, we will someday be able to repeat the famous words of St. Clare: "Go confidently, my soul, because you have a good companion for your journey. Go, because the One who has created you, has always watched over you, and has sanctified you."

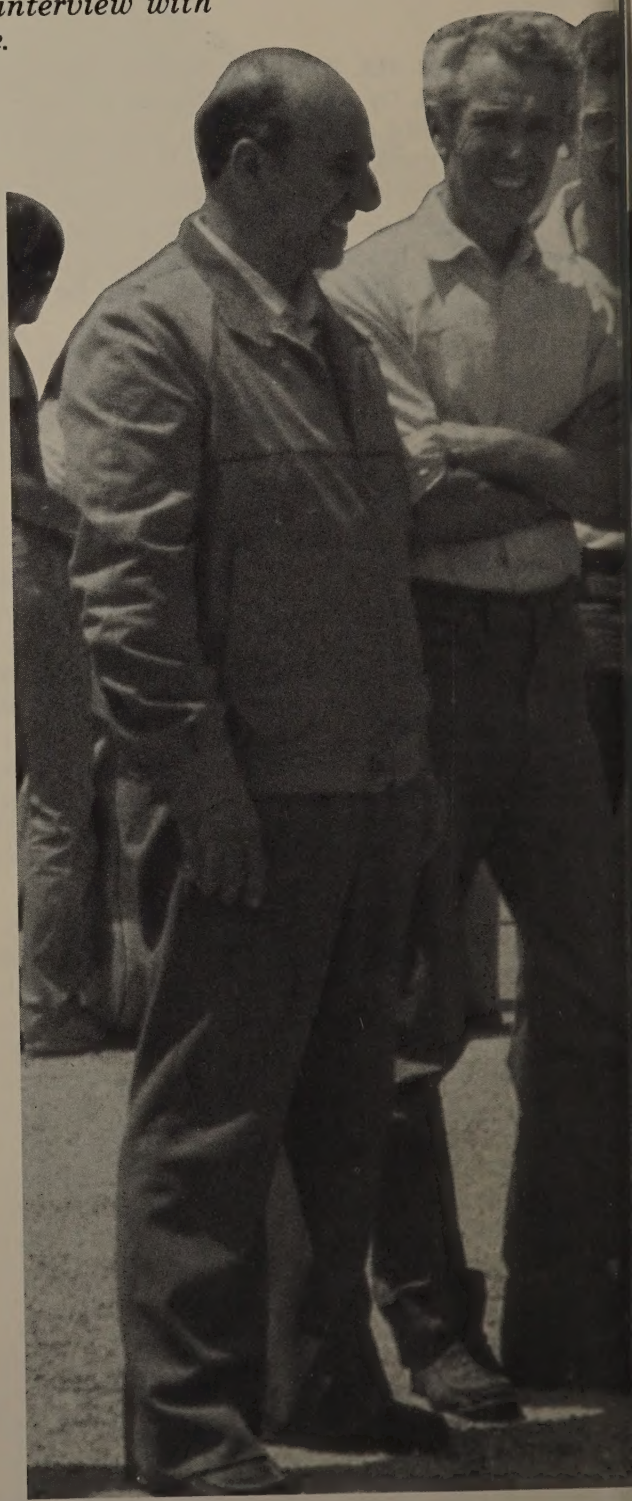
Living this way we will reap fruits, fruits, and more fruits for the cause: "That all may be one."[3]

From the book Journey *by Chiara Lubich, New City Press, 1984, New York.*

1)Refers to Jesus in the moment when, on the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) 2) See inside back cover; 3) Jn. 17:21).

LOPPIANO: A PERMANENT

Loppiano is not new to most of our readers. The first of the mini-cities built by the Focolare Movement in various countries around the world, saw continued growth and development this year. Its purpose and future were recently highlighted in an interview with Chiara Lubich, excerpts of which are presented here.



In Loppiano,[1] **just as in** any other society whether large or small, change takes place constantly. Spending any Sunday of the year here would be enough to convince you of this. The number of baptisms tell us that the population is on the rise. If you observe the work in progress going on in the city you'll see that new houses are being added here and there. The growing number of visitors confirms that this little Tuscan city of the Focolare is becoming always better known throughout Italy and abroad.

To get a more precise idea of its growth and development, let's look over some relevant data. Over the past few years Loppiano has seen a constant increase in the number of inhabitants to the point that today they number well over 600. For those who are fond of statistics, that implies an increase of over twenty percent in two years! Some of the citizens come from the farthest corners of the world, while others are the newborn additions to resident families. Gloria, Francesco, Tony, and Emmanuela were all born in Loppiano during the last few months while, just to name a few, Philbert came from Ruanda, Lula from Peru, and others from Bolivia, Polynesia, Japan, Egypt, Syria and Northern Ireland.

Ever since an agreement was reached with the township administration of Incisa Valdarno, of which Loppiano is a part, a new wave of construction has swept the town. There are plans underway for new roads and buildings.

One final statistic deals with the number of visitors—50,000 this year. They came most of all from Italy but also from all over Europe and the other continents. Every Sunday, rain or shine, is a day to meet and to share, a time for joy. For this reason, too, Loppiano's fame continues to spread and the city grows. ►

MARIAPOLIS

By MICHELE ZANZUCCHI

—ever changing
—ever growing

Christians of different traditions live in Loppiano as well as men and women of different races and nations.

An old Capuchin monastery has been renovated and is now a center for priests who are already familiar with or have an interest in knowing more about the spirituality of the Focolare. Priests from Europe and every other continent come here to live a concrete experience of unity, an experience they treasure as many of them are used to oftentimes living alone in a parish.

However, the priests alone do not account for the recent twenty percent increase. Other centers of the Focolare Movement have also taken root here. For example, there are centers for the men and women volunteers. They are people who work in the various fields and sectors of society and would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit.

And how could we forget the Gen, the young people of the Movement, who have been coming to Loppiano in droves particularly after their youth festival, the Genfest[2], took place in Rome's Sports Arena just a few months ago? To be among the Gen is like receiving an injection of vitality and joy. They have committed themselves—according to the one law of Loppiano, mutual love—to working towards the realization of the civilization of love: the goal of the entire city.

But a society grows and develops, above all, if it acquires an always better definition of itself, as sociologists would say, if it keeps clarifying its goals. Simply put: a large or small society goes ahead if it has a clear idea of what it is about and where it wants to go. For Loppiano, as for other offspring of the Church, it is important to look to the founder in order to understand in which direction it should go. In our case, we look to Chiara Lubich. Chiara's visits to Loppiano provide an unequaled opportunity to better understand what the city is all about and to focus on the goals to be reached.

During her most recent visit Chiara answered several questions of the citizens of the little city. They gave her the opportunity to describe how Loppiano could have an on-going Genfest. She affirmed that Loppiano has all the elements for it: young people, internationality creativity, musical talents, a wide variety of experiences of life and many people who come seeking ways to build a more united world. There are those who are rich and those who are poor, people of different races and Christian traditions, people who are laborers, students, farmers and professors.

The role of Loppiano as a "city-school" was also developed during Chiara's visit. She explained how all of Loppiano's citizens should work at preparing themselves for the task of bringing the revolution of the Gospel everywhere in the world and, in so doing, contribute towards the realization of the civilization of love. Loppiano will serve as a school for all the members and friends of the Focolare Movement—young and old, religious and lay people, married and single—everyone.

To the Gen 3 (ages 9 to 15), Chiara spoke of the need to commit themselves to working together with others at resolving the problem of hunger in the world, particularly among children. Their commitment, she told them, should be a concrete one, a step towards reaching that "united world" which is the aim of all the youth of the Movement on every continent.

Loppiano's purpose and future were described in even greater depth by Chiara during an interview which will form the basis of a new publication on the Mariapolis. We are pleased to be able to present the following excerpts from it.

You have spoken about Loppiano on different occasions as the "city of mutual love," as the "city on the hilltop," as the "city of youth," as the "city-school." How would you define Loppiano today? Is it all of these realities together?

Yes, Loppiano is all of this and more. It is, for example, an ecumenical city because of the presence of people of other

Christian traditions; it is a city which is reaching out to those who suffer uncertainties, lack of hope. It is, in fact, a city that gives hope and certainty. It is a hand extended to those who are searching for happiness often, unfortunately, in the wrong places: in drugs or eroticism. This little city, in fact, shows the world that true and perfect joy lies in following Jesus. It gives light to those who suffer disunity in their families or elsewhere because it offers an example and the secret of unity. It breaks down the hostility of those who are tempted to carry out any form of violence be cause it affirms, and clearly demonstrates, by the internationality of its citizens for example, that it is through meekness, a meekness which comes from loving, that the world can be conquered....

Loppiano came to life while the Second Vatican Council was in session. That seems to be a very significant coincidence, don't you think?

The Holy Spirit truly worked in an extraordinary way during the Council. He was certainly not missing also in the new movements, and ours is one of them, which developed at about the same time and were approved by the Church. It is logical therefore that the Spirit would emphasize in these movements the concepts that he emphasized in the Council.

The Council affirmed, for example, that all Christians are called to reach sanctity and that the whole Church is missionary by nature. If we look at Loppiano we can observe in its citizens the sincere, joyful and tenacious thrust toward sanctity; just as one can admire their burning desire to bring Christ into today's world.

Chiara Lubich with the citizens of Loppiano during her most recent visit.

The Council restored the role of the laity in the Church. In Loppiano—where almost all the components of the Church are represented— lay persons represent by far the largest group, and one can see that the cause of Christ is fostered not only by priests and by religious men and women, but by the laity as well, by families, young people.

The Council emphasized the testimony that lay people should give to the world in everything they do, at their jobs and elsewhere. In Loppiano, work is considered very important and professional competence is seriously pursued.

The Council wants lay people "to apply themselves diligently to the study of revealed truths and insistently ask the Lord for the gift of wisdom."[3] In Loppiano, people study and prepare themselves to dialogue with today's world. They strive to possess that wisdom that illuminates all things.

The Council affirms that "lay people should be prepared to carry on a dialogue with others, believers and non-believers, to announce to all the message of Christ."[4] It is for this that citizens of Loppiano are prepared. And we could go on and on.

What do you think Loppiano will become?

Loppiano will become always more like the "city on the hilltop," a point of reference to which people of every nation and race can turn to in the effort to build a united world. It will become an always more living segment of the Church, of the post-conciliar Church, a city open onto the world, in dialogue with the faithful of other religions, with the main contemporary cultures; a city to which many can turn in order to see the unity Jesus prayed for already on its way. □

1) Loppiano is the first of the permanent Mariapolis of the Focolare Movement. Others are in existence in various parts of the world and one is in development in the U.S. See back cover for a description of permanent Mariapolis. 2) See Living City *Vol 24, N7; 3) LG 35; 4) AA 31.*

Seeds Of New Life

United Nations

Ginetta Calliari was part of the first group of young women around Chiara Lubich in the beginning. It was through their discovery that God is love and their life centered on the Gospel, that the Focolare Movement came to life.

Ginetta has worked for the Movement in Brazil for the last 26 years. We asked her to answer a few questions for us.

Living City: Can you share with our readers some of your first impressions upon arriving in this vast continent and, in particular, to a land of such sharp contrasts as Brazil?

Ginetta: I first landed in Recife, in the northeastern part of the country. I was immediately struck by the enormous contrast between wealth and poverty. I saw huts made of mud next to towering skyscrapers, people in rags while others wore jewels. I had never seen such slums, overcrowded with people who had fled from the rural areas, driven by hunger, draught, starvation wages and even expulsion by cruel and greedy landlords. They had come to the city trying to improve their lot, only to find more misery and lose all hope. The economic and political structure seemed to ensure that the rich would become always richer and the poor always poorer. The Church through its representatives made itself the voice of those who had no voice.

In front of problems of this magnitude and complexity we understood that only a society of people made new by the Gospel would be able to provide a solution.

Through the spirituality of the Focolare which is centered on love, a community which aimed at following the example of the early Christians was born in Brazil. These people shared their possessions and brought a new life with them wherever they went, particular-

Opposite page: Workers mow a field of lablab beans in northeast Brazil.

Right: Ginetta Calliari

ly where alienation—the result of a lack of love—was the greatest.

Living City: We know that things have changed since you first arrived. Could you tell us how and where you first started?

Ginetta: One of the poorest neighborhoods in the slums of Recife, called "Hell's Island," was particularly entrusted to us by a priest who had to move elsewhere. Hundreds of people lived there in huts built on piles which, at high tide, were flooded by the waters of the lagoon, carrying all kinds of sewage with them.

That's where our whole community began to work. We knew that it was not to give that we were going but to receive from brothers and sisters who were greater than we were, because their suffering was greater. How true it rang to our ears Jesus' words: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me" (Mt.25:35-37).

However it was not merely a matter of feeding or clothing them. We realized that we had to help them to become responsible for their own advancement. It was not easy. Years and years of living at the margins of society had caused them to be steeped in apathy and resignation. They simply watched us work, without lifting a finger to help us help them.

One day, however, a particularly high tide threatened to wipe out the whole neighborhood. Some of the people fled, but the great majority stayed on, resigned to the worst. When we got there, we found ourselves separated from the shacks by a stream of muddy water which, together with the city waste, carried the drainage of a nearby hospital. We could see rats and snakes floating along with the current. Petrified by fear, we nevertheless felt we could not stop other people's lives were at stake. We then waded into the water up to our waist. In the end we managed to carry all our friends to safety, but this time we were not alone in our work. Touched by our love, the local people joined us in the rescue efforts.

To have suffered and worked together not only created a strong bond among all, but it generated the spark of a new life on the island; the newly discovered sense of human brotherhood in time made of these isolated and alienated people a community striving to live the Gospel with us. And so "Hell's Island" was re-named "Island of St. Teresina." They also began to share with one another the little they had. Adding to it what we could share, it was possible to meet the most urgent needs of the community.

Living City: It was certainly a slow and painful journey. How did things progress?

Ginetta: We realized that there was much to be done with very scarce means. We experienced however how mutual love attracts God's providence, the little that was given returned a hundred times over as the Gospel tells us: "Everyone who has left houses, ►

mother, children or land for the sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life" (Mt. 19:29). For instance: to prevent future floods it was necessary to raise the ground level, at least by a few yards. Hundreds of truckloads of sand and soil were donated and the project was completed in record time. Helped by some engineers who offered their time, the people themselves built small canals down the streets to facilitate the drainage of water. They then organized a neighborhood association and elected a local council to discuss the various problems directly with the City Council. It was self-promotion that we saw develop out of one, unique force: the words of the Gospel put into practice.

Living City: Could you tell us about another project?

Ginetta: A young lawyer, a construction engineer, a social worker, a health care worker and others moved to Santa Teresina to be part of the community. Their presence made it possible to start a Community Center which provides a variety of services such as courses in reading and writing, hygiene, home economics, sewing, etc. In this way people could learn a trade.

Living City: What about the land situation you mentioned earlier?

Ginetta: As I said, it is another crucial problem in Brazil. The big landowners own vast extensions of uncultivated land on which some very poor families called "posseiros" have settled. This group of people are barely surviving on the little they can draw from the land.

A typical hut of one of the "posseiros" families.

There is a law stating that the posseiro may own the land after living on it for at least five years. However the landowners use every means to chase these families from the land, using such extreme measures as killing the head of the family or burning their huts and crops.

A member of our community, however, who lives the spirituality of the Movement, became a very different kind of landowner, one who was particularly sensitive to human values. She had one hundred and thirty families living on her land and although she had donated two hundred acres to them, their problems were far from being solved. Scattered in the vast and dense Amazon forest, they lived without electricity and without water, working the soil with their bare hands and sticks as their only tools.

Living City: This is hard to believe in our age of highly developed technology. Did you find a way to fill the gap caused by lack of instruction and technical know how?

Ginetta: This is an experience which has been recounted on other occasions, but it is one which is very powerful. A sociologist in the Movement, Maria de Jesus, decided to leave behind career, home, and friends, to go and live among these families. She set up residence in a bug-infested hut of dry mud, covered by a straw roof. On horseback she covered miles and miles from one family to another, establishing contact with all.

This is equatorial territory, which means a temperature of one hundred degrees and more, with a dramatically painful water shortage. The stagnant well water where man and beast quenched their thirst and bathed was undrinkable. With the communion of goods among the members of the Focolare

community, Maria de Jesus acquired some filters. She showed the posseiros how to boil and sterilize the water. With a group of experts from the Movement, the people dug wells and installed primitive pumps. This enabled them to draw a water supply from the soil for a number of families.

Maria's hut became a meeting place for the posseiros community which began to gather around her. The priest was unable to come more than once a month. Every Sunday, however, they meditated together on the word of life and tried to put it into practice. Through their efforts to live the word of God a new mentality began to develop among the posseiros. One of them, Joca, said recently, "Once we lived without taking an interest in one another. Now we understand that we are all brothers and sisters. Therefore we *must* help one another. We have no money, but now we have the strength that comes from being united.

There were among them those who drew more profit from the land and others less. In order to mutually help one another they organized cooperatives where everybody's land would be tilled by all working together. By working this way, they doubled the production which, divided among all the farmers, even allowed in the end for a small percentage to cover the expenses of the community.

Living City: Does this system, this "network of love" (if we may call it that) cover the needs of the community?

"Once we lived without taking interest in one another. Now we understand that we are all brothers and sisters. That is why we must help one another. ...we have the strength that comes from being united."

Joca, a posseiro

Ginetta: There is still a long way to go in providing for all their needs. The posseiros still work the land with extremely primitive tools—there is no doubt that a tractor would make things easier.

They also certainly need a medical infirmary, a school, all the basic structures required by a growing community. This community now bears the name "Magnificat"—in reference to the social revolution proclaimed by Mary when she said: "He has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places"(Lk 1:52).

The bishop came to say Mass and blessed the community, expressing his wish that this seemingly forsaken spot of the Amazon might one day become a place where people would say, "Come and see...."

Living City: This would be our wish as well. We have seen in the two examples that you have briefly outlined for us the powerful effect that the Gospel put into practice can have on an environment. They seem to be a testimony of hope for resolving many more of the problems that this immense country faces.

Ginetta: We hope so. Even though we can do no more than plant small seeds, we feel that we are on the right path. We can already see fruits: christenings, confirmations, partaking of the sacraments. Many have given up alcohol and drugs, and there is a new sense of responsibility towards work, as well as more respect for the aged. I would say that through living the Gospel and putting mutual love into practice, these people are beginning to discover what it means to be children of God.

My years of experience in Brazil, have reconfirmed to me that in living the Gospel a person is fulfilled not only spiritually, but in the human dimension as well. ►

Everyone's life can be transformed by that "small seed". Marcia shares her experience as a young woman from a rich Brazilian family while the second experience reveals the difficult journey from darkness to light lived by two groups of prisoners. Two Brazilian stories that are very different from one another yet which both confirm the words Ginetta shared.

"The poor are poor because they want to be. The unemployed are unemployed because they do not want to work." This was the mentality in which Marcia grew up in a rich Brazilian family. But that all changed....

To have in order to give

The town of Pelotas is in South Brazil, the richest part of the country. It is neither very big nor very small, and, according to Marcia, who was born there, it has a narrow mentality. Even today it has customs and traditions that seek to place families into various elite groups. At fifteen the girls make their debut in society, wearing long, expensive dresses to parties and dances. The social position of the family, dependent upon economic status, is all important. Here that great inequality of wealth, typical of Brazil as a whole, is particularly marked.

Marcia is 22, the youngest of six children. Her features, her eyes, even certain of her attitudes, give a clue to her origins. Marcia's family has been 'Brazilian' for only two generations. Her grandparents, on both her father's and mother's side settled in Latin America from Lebanon when they were still very young. They came without money but with a fighting spirit. From them Marcia's parents learned to be enterprising, hard working, and tenacious.

"I don't remember my mother being with me when I was small," said Marcia. "She always worked with my father from morning to night.

Marcia (photo to the left) and Fatima (right) began to visit and help the people of the "favelas."

She shared with me the picture Everything they have, they acquired through their own efforts." Now they have a large shop—the most elegant in town—selling the choicest materials to an exclusive clientele. At first they did everything themselves: purchasing stock, selling, bookkeeping. "They balanced the books at night," Marcia recalls. First they became comfortable, and then, very rich.

"When I was a child," Marcia went on, "my father had always told me that the poor are poor because they want to be; the unemployed because they do not want to work." Not having any basis for comparison she accepted this evaluation.

Until, that is, unknown horizons opened up before her and she came to the conclusion that reality was very different and that only her father's personal struggle had led him to reason in this way. Marcia had begun to experience the burden of selfishness and the value of love. She had seen the effects of both in the social field.

She sat in front of me answering questions: a human being with human problems, but also with a maturity born of her newfound convictions. of her family situation and the new mentality which even her parents were beginning to acquire. I interrupted her to ask, "How did you reach these conclusions?" She seemed unwilling to go back over the past. She said softly, "It was when I was fourteen and going to school. One day we heard that a chartered bus bringing girls home from a 'Gen'[1] meeting had been involved in an accident: a tragic accident with deaths and serious injuries. As I have told you, in Pelotas we know almost everyone. This event made a deep impression on me. Some of the girls went to my school.

"My sister Fatima who is a year older than I, had already been to several Gen meetings and she was enthusiastic about it. I hadn't paid much attention because I was convinced that I didn't have much to learn. I had had a good Christian education....

"But some of my classmates, whom, at the time of the accident I discovered were involved in the Gen movement, were so insistent that I should go with them that I finally gave in. What struck me most was the simplicity of what was put to me. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. And it was Jesus that one was doing it to."

That was the essence of the meeting, and the impact on Marcia was tremendous. As a result she changed her life both at home and outside her home.

An important, one might say a determining factor, was this: Marcia was not alone in the family in that urge from within to change. Fatima was with her. They went ahead together with an understanding between them that became a challenge, a mutual help, an encouragement, a continuous support. " 'Where two or three are united in my name, I am in their midst' (Mt. 18:20). This promise was our strength."

Together with their new friends they started to visit a slum area, a *favela*. It was the first time they had encountered ►

poverty on such a scale. They had never seen it before, they had never even heard of it. It was all a confirmation of what Marcia had felt that first time, "Insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

It was necessary, therefore, to welcome with joy the onslaught of the children when they arrived among the shacks—children who were dirty and sticky, with lice in their hair, but who were happy to see them back, happy to think of the new games they could play together. It was necessary, too, to accept coffee and other things served in cups and in places where running water was a luxury and where there was nothing but deprivation.

It was at this time, during these visits that Marcia and her sister came to see always more clearly how important it was not to stop at appearances. For the first time they experienced universal brotherhood. Talking together, sharing situations very different from their own, they discovered that one could want to work and be unable to find it, want to lead a dignified life and be unable to, want to learn and not have the means. They were people who were left at the margins of society, and were regarded as "scum," as "good for nothing."

So Marcia and her sister then began to take notice of the servants who lived in their house. There were three of them, and each had a tale of difficult situations, sufferings and problems.

Marcia explained: "Mother had taught us to respect those who work for us. But this was only theoretical, a matter of etiquette. How things soon began to change! I never could have imagined how much! It became natural for me every morning, to get up and make my bed. When I got home from school I helped prepare dinner. I could no longer bear to be waited on. I was careful to see that everything worked properly."

Being in contact with so many cases of extreme need and now having the eyes to recognize those needs, Marcia became aware of the superfluous things she had. Giving these things away gave a joy that was like receiving a gift from God. For her it was a constant discovery: giving up the snack she usually bought at school, taking a bus instead of a taxi, or walking when her mother couldn't take her by car. "It really was an adventure,"laughed Marcia,"because Daddy (of good Lebanese stock) always said 'a girl should never travel by bus or walk alone on the street. It's not proper, and it's dangerous.'"

At a certain point she told me, "One of the most important things I have learned is that I can *have* in order to give. Possess, yes, but for others. At first it hurt a lot and I asked Jesus, 'Why did you let me be born into a wealthy family like this?' It seemed to me that if I had been poor I would have lived in a *favela* and I would have been able to have a stronger, closer relationship with him. Then I understood that, if I wished it, nothing I had would any longer be mine.'"

In fact later, under the influence of their two daughters, the parents changed, gradually but completely. They came to look on it as a good thing to make others happy. Was there someone who was convalescing? They made room for them in the house. Were there some poor friends of the girls who wanted to swim but couldn't? The pool was put at their disposal. Was someone in need of a rest who couldn't go away for vacation? The house, the garden, and all their comforts were there for them. And then there were meetings to be arranged, one after another, for the youngsters, for adults, for everyone.

For the last few years Marcia has been living away from home. She is studying physics in the city of Porto Allegre and shares an apartment with other Gen. They have only the minimum of essential furnishings. Marcia's mother offered to send her a bed for her room. "Yes,"she answered, "but I can't guarantee that I will use it myself. Is that all right with you?" Her mother agreed that it was. Now, when she sends anything she always remembers that there are others.

Her father, who went to see her, was struck by their lifestyle, by how they lived the communion of goods among themselves and with others. When he was leaving he commented, "This is a place where a sharing of goods is lived, not merely talked about." Now he no longer says, or even thinks, that the poor are poor because they want to be. □

Mariele Quartana

1) See inside back cover.

The prisoners

"The situation is tense," the warden told us, "three new men were brought in today and they are causing trouble already. But if you want to meet with the other prisoners, go to the last cell; it's the largest."

A guard accompanied us. We passed through the iron gate and walked along the corridor flanked on either side by cells. We passed the three men who had not long ago been brought in. It was a drab and cold environment. Only two months ago we began coming here. For a moment I was afraid of what could happen to us. I looked at my friends and tried to control

my feelings. In my hands I had the leaflet of the word of life for that month: "Blessed are the peacemakers (Mt. 5:9)." "Are we deluding ourselves to think these men could ever change?" I thought.

The guard led us to a cell where about twenty men were waiting for us. They had put the room in order, covered the mattresses, and tried to make it as neat and pleasant as possible. They shook our hands with joy and respect. They really were eagerly waiting for this moment. I felt ashamed of ►

my doubts and, as I listened to them, my shame quickly turned to hope.

"I will never forget," Adalberto said, "the first day you came and visited us. Things have changed a lot since then for me," Sebastian said. "Life had become unbearable for me but now that I've found a different way to live I want to always know more about it so that I can live this way with my family when I get out."

"As for me," Juca broke in, "I've made a lot of mistakes and my sentence will be long but the word of life always arrives at the right moment for me. I know the life you share with us is real, and when I try to live it I am able to calmly face everything. Now I think that with your unity and the help of my friends I'll be able to hang on."

Everyone wanted to share something; to give in return for what they had received. I noticed that they seemed to be free from the weight of their imprisonment and their worries about the future, about their families.

Lastly, Antonio told us, "When I was nine I began stealing. I was continually in and out of juvenile reformatories. I learned a lot from other delinquents and my early 'career' eventually landed me in jail. I thought that God existed but I had no interest. Now I found God here and for this reason alone I'm glad I got caught. Who knows what God has in mind for me now?"

We stayed longer than we intended and the guard arrived to escort us to the gate. Our friends seemed confident that by the next meeting the three new prisoners would be ready to join our group. As we turned the corner to leave we looked back and saw our friends approaching the three new arrivals to make them feel welcome. It was clear they understood one another very well and they were really trying to be 'peacemakers.' The seed of the revolution the Gospel can bring into our lives had been sown.

One of the prisoners had given us a present—a little boat he had made with matches. In that moment I remembered having once heard that prisoners never give anything to anyone because they are all wrapped up in themselves and in their rights and are only out to get from others. Who would ever believe what I just witnessed?

"I know that the life you share with us is real, and when I try to live it I am able to calmly face everything."

Juca, a prisoner

After visiting the prison I went to visit Angela, a friend who does similar work in the penitentiary of another town. Ever since I met Angela I wanted to work with prisoners. She told me that she had begun her work with the prisoners' families and with a group of people who worked in prisoner rehabilitation. At a certain point she felt they were ready to know more about her life. Many prisoners and their

families had been asking what made her so caring and happy. One thing that she could share with them was the practice of living the word of life each day.

"Some were a little skeptical," she said, "some indifferent but the ones who took it seriously changed so much that they attracted the attention of others and had a good influence on them.

"We are also helped by Mr. Matias, the plumber of the penitentiary. He lives the spirituality of unity of the Focolare, too. He is always in contact with the prisoners and with simplicity he shares with them how he tries to live the word of life. Everyone accepts and trusts him.

"One evening, by mistake, the night guard locked Mr. Matias in a cell and left. In the beginning he was afraid, but remembering that love casts out fear he began talking to the inmates. Impressed with his attitude, they started telling him about their lives. They talked all through the night. The next morning when he left, they were like brothers.

"Then there were Chico and Anselmo, for example, who were used to giving orders to everyone from the first to the last cell, and if by chance someone dared to disobey them they were quick to take revenge. Now they are the ones who help keep peace in the place. In every cell there is a copy of the word of life prominently placed on the wall and little by little the pornographic pictures have disappeared.

"Every Saturday now a group of prisoners goes with the volunteers who do pastoral work in the prison; they attend Mass in the parish. They usually participate in the liturgy and in the singing, and some of them receive the sacraments.

"But I confess that it isn't always easy," Angela continued. "There are times when we really get discouraged and feel like we are wasting our time. Then we find strength in the Eucharist and in our unity with friends who try to live as we do.

"Some time ago just when things seemed to be going well, everything collapsed. Mario, whom we really trusted, escaped. We were so shocked that we didn't know what to do. We asked God for help. The days passed and in spite of the suffering we felt, we were sure that Mario would give himself up. In fact, he showed up, ashamed and not knowing how to apologize; he looked for us and said that when he was out of jail he felt more imprisoned than when he was in. He remembered that he had to do what God wanted and so he returned to do all his time so that he could leave one day as a free man.

"With changes of this kind among them, the warden decided to allow a new initiative. These prisoners were given permission to live and work together outside the prison under the supervision of these pastoral workers."

I was impressed by what Angela told me. I asked if I could go with her the following day to see this new initiative. As soon as I entered the house I noticed the neatness and order everywhere. The word of life was hanging prominently on the wall. Two prisoners had just arrived from work and welcomed us. Another three would come later and one other was resting because he worked night shift at a bakery.

One of the men, Celso, asked me, "Do you know what it is like to be in prison? Hell! Violence was always on the verge of breaking out. Time seemed to have no end; to enjoy ourselves we fought. We had to spend the night with one eye open and a knife under the mattress. I lived like that until I saw how some of these guys had changed, really changed!. I decided that I wanted to change too, to take an interest in other people—something I had never done before. Throughout the day I discovered I had so many opportunities to serve others. At first there were three of us, after a couple of months there were already five and gradually everyone in our block was drawn into making an effort to live like this. We make lots of mistakes and fall back to our old ways but we try to keep starting over again, and to believe in the other guy's good will. Now that place has really become a community. We agreed not to keep knives or blades. This, too, helped us to trust each other."

Seeing Celso speak with such confidence and dignity reminded me of the friends I had met with yesterday in the penitentiary of my city. Celso, it seemed had already found his place in society; now he was a peacemaker, too. "Everyone can become a peacemaker, I thought to myself, even in prison!" □

AN INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

A step closer to the civilization of love

by ALBERTO FERRUCCI

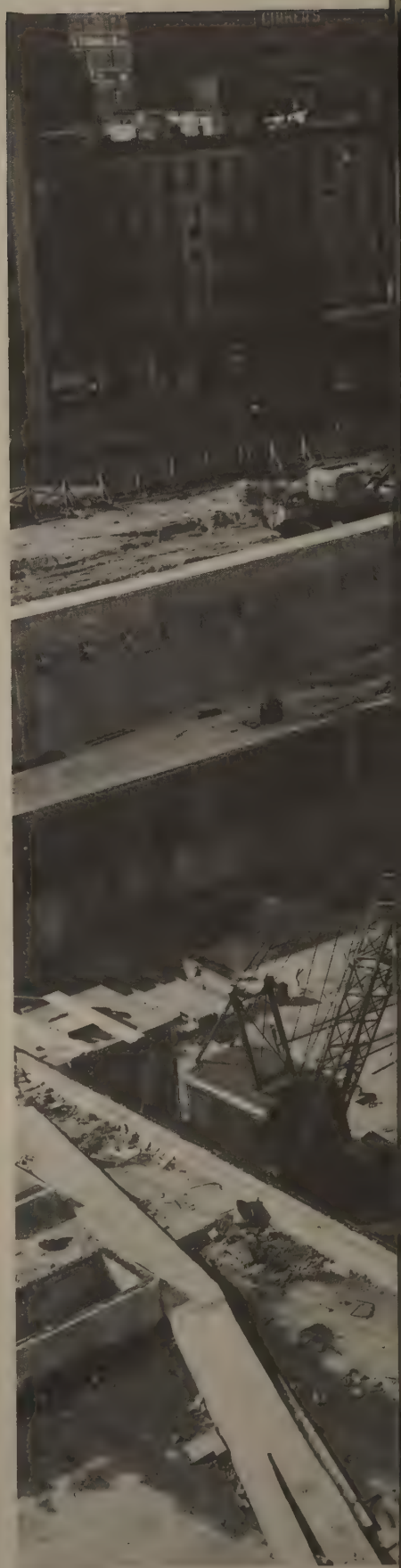
Before an audience of 3,500, at a Convention sponsored by the New Humanity Movement[1] in Rome on June 3, 1984, Chiara Lubich commented in her talk on "Economy and Work—a Christian Perspective": "We need a planetary social awareness." The delegates from every continent who participated in the meeting left with the determination to sponsor similar conventions in their respective countries.

They did take place in the following months in North and South America, in Australia, as well as Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Middle East, Africa, and all over Europe. Notwithstanding the different social and cultural milieu, the political context oftentimes opposite, the obvious differences existing between great metropolises and farming towns, the reports, reactions, and above all impressions of these conventions were highly favorable. A rich collection of on-the-spot testimonies arrived at the central office of the New Humanity Movement outside Rome, Italy. They could be summarized in one, unequivocal statement: the evangelical message, clear, and without compromise, leads to the same effects, and the same practical conclusions, in whatever environment it is put into practice.

Thus it can be noted how an action such as the communion of goods is being introduced or renewed not only among individuals but also among different ethnic and social groups even in places where there are many social inequalities and where big land ownership is still enforced in a tenacious feudal system.

June 3rd also saw the birth of an important project: the establishment of an International Bureau of Economy and Work to study, with a worldwide vision, the most crucial problems that our planet is facing today in order to contribute towards finding consistent and universal solutions.

The President of the new Bureau is Dr. Alberto Ferrucci who shared with us in the following article his thoughts on this first Bureau.



United Nations

It is enough to think of the frequent episodes of hijacking to make all of us realize that a few individuals have the power to set off international reactions that exceed everyone's control. We realize that we live constantly under the impending reality of some great tragedy. For many, in fact, the tragedy has occurred already, because many have already died of violence or starvation.

We all feel frustrated by our helplessness in the face of events which seem to be unavoidable while they are often the fruit of a poisonous plant which may be growing in our own garden: selfishness.

In his travels, Pope John Paul II never ceases to exhort all peoples to choose the civilization of love. On June 1, 1980, he urged the youth of France to open themselves to the existence of others: *To love is, therefore, essentially to give oneself to others. Far from being an instinctive inclination, love is a conscious decision of the will to go towards others. To be able to love truly, it is necessary to detach oneself from many things and above all from oneself, to give gratuitously, to love to the end. This dispossession of oneself, a long and demanding task, is exhausting and exalting. It is the source of balance. It is the secret of happiness.*

...Young people of France, it is more than ever the time to work hand-in-hand at the civilization of love, according to the expression dear to my great predecessor Paul VI. What a gigantic workyard! What a stirring task!

His proposition may seem an impossible utopia, yet hardly a day passes in which we have not witnessed the failure of the civilization of egotism. Even after society has paid its price in the form of personal alienation, violence, and economic upheaval, the economic order as it is at present still cannot guarantee all peoples (not even those of the most highly developed nations) the one, most elementary and most important means for each person's fulfillment: work.

History teaches us what happens when the selfish drives of nations clash. The world wars have caused enormous destruction and the loss of millions of lives. The great statesmen who lived during ►

these dramatic moments saw the need and urgency of creating something that would supercede the logic of power (the power of the stronger) and go beyond self-interest.

Thus they created the United Nations where every nation, no matter how small, could be heard. Then came UNESCO to contribute to the peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture, and communication; UNICEF, for the protection of children, FAO, for the problems of world feeding, the World Bank for assistance of peoples in financial difficulty, and so on.

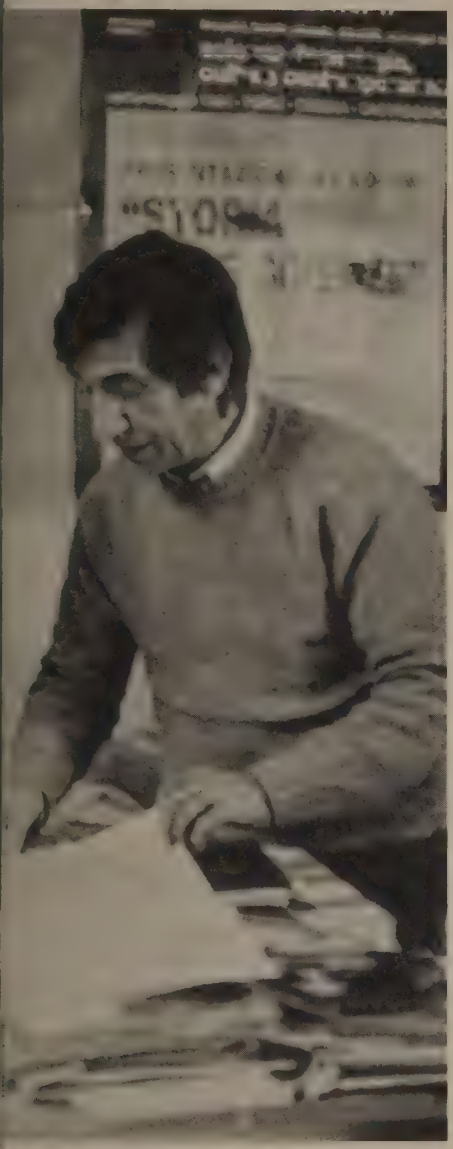
Forty years have passed, the statesmen are no longer the same, and some of the organizations created in the past may have lost their influence. Their life depends on the general consensus of all, they have no armies to make their decisions respected. However, these structures, generated in the aftermath of the death of millions of people, were perhaps the first signs of progress along the hard road toward the civilization of love. Also today, therefore, there are signs of a new awareness that the life of our society must be given a different direction. All over the world people of various nations, races and religions are now getting together spontaneously to work for peace, for economic development, to fight hunger, and disease, protect the environment and conserve the culture of the past.

In this context, the New Humanity Movement has also asked itself what its task should be among the many needs in today's world. In the civilization of love everyone fulfills himself or herself by putting his or her talents at the service of all. The New Humanity Movement is particularly inspired by Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "may they all be one" (Jn.17:21). When unity becomes the motivating force of all human activity, concrete results are not long in coming. It becomes obvious that when an industry is in crisis and working "together" proves to be more productive than flinging mutual accusations, that for technological development it is more profitable to work as a team rather than as isolated individuals.

To work together is not so easy. Someone must start to be a "builder of unity", someone capable of facing the difficulties of today's society, someone who is not afraid to overextend himself or herself when the situation demands it.

This experience of being "catalysts of unity" may be lived by many people at the same time, in many parts of the world, wherever this simple but highly effective secret is put into practice. The results will vary, of course, but certain characteristics will be similar. The communication of these experiences between people of different cultures and in different situations will contribute towards helping many to reach a "planetary social awareness."

Thus, the contacts among persons who wish to bring unity into their own environment can create a network of places where the civilization of love is already taking shape. To co-ordinate this network, the New Humanity Movement is creating a series of international, national and regional bureaus, each taking care of one of the many aspects of human activity. These bureaus will be composed of profes-



"In the civilization of love, everyone fulfills himself or herself by putting his or her talents at the service of all."

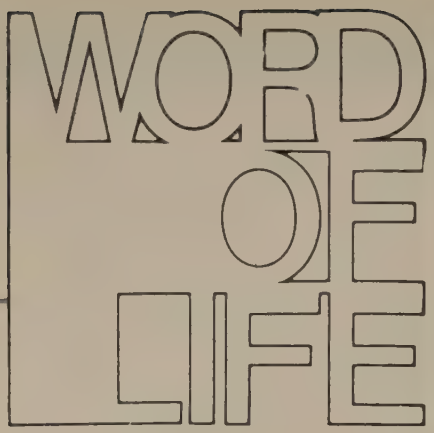
sionals in different fields who can guide others to becoming "catalysts of unity" by helping them to understand the importance for human fulfillment, of choosing the civilization of love over a civilization of selfishness. They will share their own experiences of creating relationships through concrete service and promoting dialogue so that altogether we can work toward a "new humanity."

The first such bureau, the International Bureau for Economy and Work, was launched at a meeting, in Rome, on June 6th and 7th, 1984. Experts chosen for their experience, particularly in the field of economy and work came from various parts of the world to participate at this meeting: Tita Puangco, a specialist in the financial problems of developing countries, came from the Philippines, as well as Francis Ganzon, a lawyer who is now working as an agricultural entrepreneur in his country; Africa was represented by Ernest Kablan, a banking executive responsible for a region on the Ivory Coast. Carlos Nadalutti, a business executive, came from Argentina and Francesco Prado, also a businessman, from Brazil. Felipa Colemen, from the United States, is one of the managers of a department of the United States government in Washington and Joseph Klock, also from the United States, is an organization expert in a multi-national telecommunications agency in New York. Among the Europeans there was Jean-Michel Bouttles, from France, a director of an industrial construction firm; Leo Andringa from Holland, a high officer of the Treasury Department; Franz Joseph Rademaker, from Germany, a businessman, and, finally, Benedetto Gui, Professor of Economics at the University of Trieste, Italy.

The meeting of the International Bureau was, first of all, a deep experience of unity among persons from very different countries and fields of endeavor. Each person was introduced to the experience and the problems of the other. The Bureau continues its activity, encouraging the creation of regional bureaus for the study, not only of economical problems, but also of the many various problems involved in the world of work. It will branch out into five study commissions; each one will be entrusted to those most competent in a particular field. One of the first projects will be to study the financing—in an exchange of resources and talents—of activities which the Bureau wishes to develop; another will be the development of relationships with other world-level organizations in the field of economy and work. In particular they will approach the problems of work and the difficulties caused by unemployment. Activities involving international cooperation will be encouraged and supported. All efforts will be made to establish an economic system that reflects a civilization of love.

Through the International Bureau a network of contacts has been created in various parts of the world. It is the hope that this "network" become always more tightly knit and more capable of encompassing all forms of human activity.

1)*See inside back cover.*



"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."
(Acts 1:8)

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

These words conclude one of Jesus' last meetings with the apostles after the Resurrection.

Most likely Jesus had spoken to them about the future coming of the Holy Spirit and since they shared an idea that was commonly held in Jewish circles, they linked this coming of the Spirit with the establishment of the kingdom of God that was to take place at the end of time. The commonly held idea was that God would triumph over all the godlessness and evil of the earth and install a kingdom of justice and peace—even social and political. Israel, then, the chosen people, would be at the center of all the nations. Hence the apostles' question to Jesus: "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" To which Jesus responded: "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

These words once again show us the tremendous distance existing between the mentality of the apostles and the mentality of Jesus. He then gently corrects their mistaken expectations. The Holy Spirit would come not in order to perform that spectacular and long-awaited change of things, but to transform them, to make them new and able to be his witnesses in the world. The kingdom of God would make its way through them, not through an extraordinary intervention from on high (more or less imitating earthly conquerors). They would have to bring and spread the life of the Risen Lord everywhere through their very person.

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

Another error into which the apostles had fallen was one of thinking that in the final restoration of things Israel would hold a place of privilege. God, however, does not give his gifts and direct his call to particular persons or groups as if they had a right or special merit and even less so that his gifts become the privilege of one group or nation. The Lord's call is a pure grace, a pure gift, that must be transmitted and shared with the entire world.

The apostles would have to be witnesses to the Risen Lord for all the peoples of the earth. Jesus came for everyone and no one should be excluded from salvation. Jesus himself, through his Spirit, will prepare events in a way that his apostles may come in contact with all the peoples, with all the cultures of the world. There is only one thing for the apostles to do: through the practice of a Christian life allow the Risen Lord to live in them in order to be totally open to the action of the Holy Spirit.

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

It is clearly then totally out of place and of no help—as Jesus observes—to look to the future and try to calculate the distance still separating us from the end of time. It would only lead to useless and unrealistic worries. The right way to await and prepare for the kingdom of God is to live the present well. Furthermore if we do it well we will experience that the kingdom of God is

EXPERIENCES

already here. Didn't Jesus tell us that he will be in us and we in him if we keep his word? (John 14:23; 15:9) And didn't he assure us of his presence there where two or more are united in his name? (Mt. 18:20)

The secret, then, the concrete way to bring about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God in action, is to let the Risen Lord live in us and among us.

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

These words are a mandate that Jesus left not only to his disciples but to the entire Church and to each of us. The task of the Church will be that of giving witness to the Risen Lord; and this is to be done not only by proclaiming it (which must be done by his ministers) but even and foremostly through the lives of each of us, his members. To witness to the Risen Lord means to show the world that Jesus is the Living Lord; and this will be possible if the world can see that Jesus is alive in us. If we live his Word, if we will know how to restrain the tendency of the "old person" in us, above all, keeping love for our neighbor alive in our hearts, if we will make a special effort to always maintain mutual love among us, then the Risen Lord will live in us, will live among us and radiate his light and grace transforming every environment with incalculable fruits. It will be him, through his Spirit, to guide our steps and our activities; it will be him to prepare circumstances and provide us with the occasions to bring his life to those in need of him.

This word of life tells us that, without downgrading the projects that we must nevertheless plan and the means that technology offers us to bring the gospel message, we must do one thing above all: be his witnesses, allowing the Risen Lord to live in us.

"You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

The witness that we Christians of various Churches and ecclesial communities bear by bringing to the world that doesn't believe the presence of the Risen Lord among us (Mt. 18:20) is more than ever the important topic at hand in this month in which we celebrate the week of prayer for Christian unity. Our common witness will lead us closer to the goal: that all may be one.

Chiara Lubich

I work at the University of Beverly Hills. It's a correspondence school where all course work is done at home—like a self study program. My main responsibility is to follow up student correspondence by making sure that application packets and all information is sent to prospective students. I am also responsible for training and supervising new employees. At one point a new girl was hired and I was in charge of her training. In the beginning she followed the way of making the application packets that I had suggested to her, which seemed to be the fastest and most productive way. After a couple of days, however, she started to devise her own way which she thought was faster and easier. In reality, it turned out to be a system which was far less productive. Since she was convinced that her way was better, she refused to comply with the system that I had taught her. My boss, in the meantime, was getting quite annoyed with my trainee who had developed her own rules and was working less productively.

At this point, I remembered the word of life, "To love God with all our heart, with all our thoughts and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves is worth more than any burnt offering or sacrifice" (Mark 12:33), and decided that the only thing

that mattered was to love her. I began by establishing a rapport with her by trying to work with *her* system. It was difficult at first because I was really the one who was supposed to be training her; but I knew that I had to let go of my ego and make myself one completely with my colleague. So with great peace I sat down beside her and began making packets her way. She didn't say a word but I often caught her watching me from the corner of her eye.

Later that afternoon she came to my desk to say that she had noticed how my system was much more productive. She also added, "Why did you listen to me and try it my way? I never had a supervisor who listened to their trainees the way you did with me." At this point we really began to work together. Not only but we were congratulated by my boss for our efficiency."

M.C.

"To respond to the promptings of the Spirit by seeking unity is to allow ourselves to be formed by the Word of God."

Pope John Paul II

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time. The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

I come from a family of four; I met the Focolare Movement when I was fourteen years old. It was at a time of particular suffering in my family. After a series of stormy arguments with my parents, my sister left home. My parents had disagreements concerning this and often I would close myself in my room not to hear them.

The spirituality of unity of the Movement seemed to me to be an answer to the disunity in my family. I was impressed when members of the Movement spoke about trying to treat each person as if he or she were Jesus and I started right away to try and love that way. I thought of my mother who had to continually tidy up after me; I could no longer picture "Jesus" cleaning my room. From that moment on, I tried my best to leave things in order. I remember that many times my father would ask me to wash his car and would give me five dollars for the job. I began to ask myself: "Would I ask Jesus for five dollars if I had washed his car?" From then on I tried to watch for the moment when the car needed to be washed and I wouldn't ask to be paid for doing it.

I became always happier with this new life. I asked myself: "If it's good for me, why not for my parents, too?" One day after they had finished watching television, I put some information about the Movement in front of them to read. They glanced at it and laughed. "We already know all these things," was their reply. I understood then that it was more important to live the Gospel, than to talk about it. From that moment on, I tried with a new determination. When my now married sister needed help with the care of her first child, I knew that this was my chance to start to bridge the gap that still existed between her and my parents. Although the decision was difficult, because it meant postponing my own summer plans, I decided to move in with her. I tried to be there just to love her—by washing dishes, cleaning the house, changing diapers, etc. By the end of the summer, family unity had grown.

That spring, while I was away attending a youth convention of the Movement in Rome, my mother accidentally saw an invitation to the Mariapolis.[1] In order to find out what I had become involved in, she decided to attend the gathering. It turned out to be a very strong and deep personal experience for her. She later explained it in this way: "I have understood that only God can fill my life."

It was an answer to my prayer. My father, however, wanted no involvement with the Movement whatsoever. Time passed and I began to feel always more strongly that God was calling me to leave everything for him—father, mother, studies, career. When I spoke about this with my parents, my mother understood immediately (by now we were sharing the same life). Although my father respected my decision to go, he could not understand why I was leaving.

During the time I was in Italy for my formation my family met with great suffering because my father became seriously ill and had to undergo major surgery. I was far away.

(Continued on page 28)

One day my mother sent me to the grocery store to get something. In the aisle with the item I wanted there was a man whose arm seemed to have been all burned. I noticed that everyone that passed him just stared and left. I, too, was afraid and decided that I would wait until he went by. However he was standing just in front of what I needed and didn't seem to be moving. Then it came to me: "This is my chance to be the first to love. I'll do it remembering that he's Jesus for me." So I went, acting perfectly 'normal' and said "hello."

The man looked at me surprised and I continued, saying: "It's a nice day, isn't it?" I couldn't find the soup I was looking for, so at this point he asked me what was the brand I wanted. Then with his "good arm" he reached up and handed me the soup. With a big smile I said: "Thank you;" I was happy that I had decided to love.

Chiarina
13 years old

This year at the Mariapolis I decided to go to breakfast earlier than usual. While I was standing inside the front hallway, I saw a little boy playing soccer against the side of the building. He started to talk to me but I didn't really want to answer his questions so I excused myself and went to see if my brother had arrived yet. It turned out he hadn't so I returned outside to wait. The little boy began to eagerly tell me about his sister's birthday and the soccer ball he had just found. Finally he asked me to play with him. I immediately said "no!" Then I thought: "This isn't right...if this were Jesus I would play with him," so I told him "okay." It came to me that I had made an effort to arrive to breakfast early and now I was going to be late. However just as we finished the first game my brother came around the corner and off we all went to breakfast. I felt great that I had made my "no" become a "yes."

Joseph
14 years old

The young and the Gospel

When I arrived at school Friday morning my friend and I had an argument. The whole morning we weren't speaking to one another. At lunch time we usually hang around together with all our friends. At a certain point I overheard her talking about me behind my back. I thought: "Well, if she talks that way about me, I can do the same to her," and I began to say critical things about her to my other friends. As I was going to my afternoon classes, I began to think: a Gen would never do this! I knew I had to overcome my hurt feelings and be the first to love. We couldn't part for the weekend on such terms! After the next class, I looked for her until I found her and I told her I was sorry to have hurt her. She was really happy and said that she was also sorry. I left school that day with a joy in my heart because I was able to forget about my own hurt feelings and restore peace with my friend.

Mary Rose
14 years old

One weekend my family and I went camping. There was an elderly man who took care of keeping the park grounds clean. He drove a little golf cart and picked up the bottles, cans, and trash. Thinking that there was Jesus in this man, I invited my sister to come with me to offer our help in cleaning up the grounds. In the end, we really received the hundredfold because he let us ride the golf cart all over the park with him while we worked.

Eddie
9 years old

(Continued from page 25)

I could only entrust him to God but I knew that since I had left because of him, God would take of my father. When I phoned a friend who worked in the hospital where my father had just been operated on he was able to tell me that the surgery had saved my father's life. I felt then such peace and gratitude.

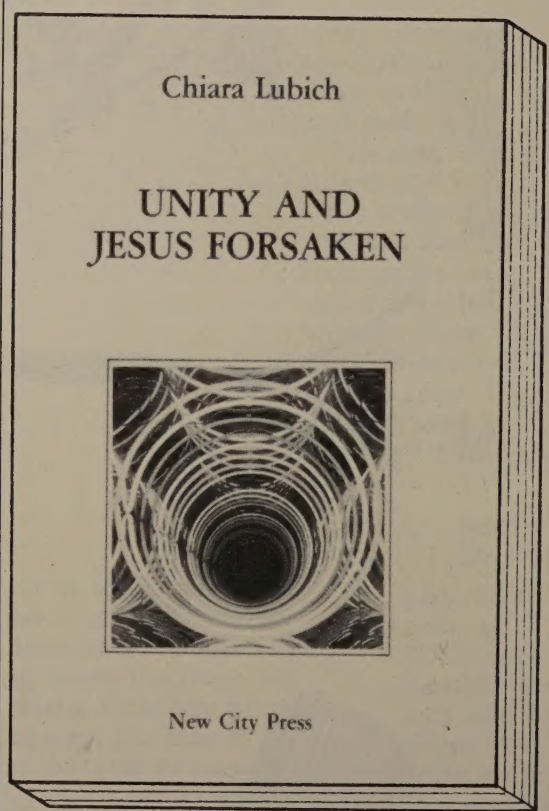
I returned home for Christmas. After being away for so long, I still felt a strain in the relationship with my father. I was determined, however, to let him know that I loved him. We did together all the things he liked to do. I even visited him at his place of work—something I had never done before—in order to spend more time with him. The night before I was to leave, I built up my courage and asked my father: "Yesterday at your job, you showed me all the things that you have done, what do you think about what I am doing?" I could sense my father's embarrassment; but I felt strongly that this could be the moment to begin a new rapport with him. With a strength that came from within, I began to speak with my father in a way that I never had before. I told him that God was everything for me. I shared with him my desire to bring the unity that the Gospel speaks of to the whole world. He listened very carefully. When supper was over I went to my room to pack.

Later that evening my mother told me, "You know your father is very proud of you. He told me, 'Over the past few days everyone in the family has been asking questions about Joe's life; I think that he should answer them the way he answered me tonight.'"

With joy, I understood that this was the beginning of the new rapport with my father that I had asked God to help me build.

J.S.H.

1) The Mariapolis are the annual summer gatherings of the Focolare Movement.



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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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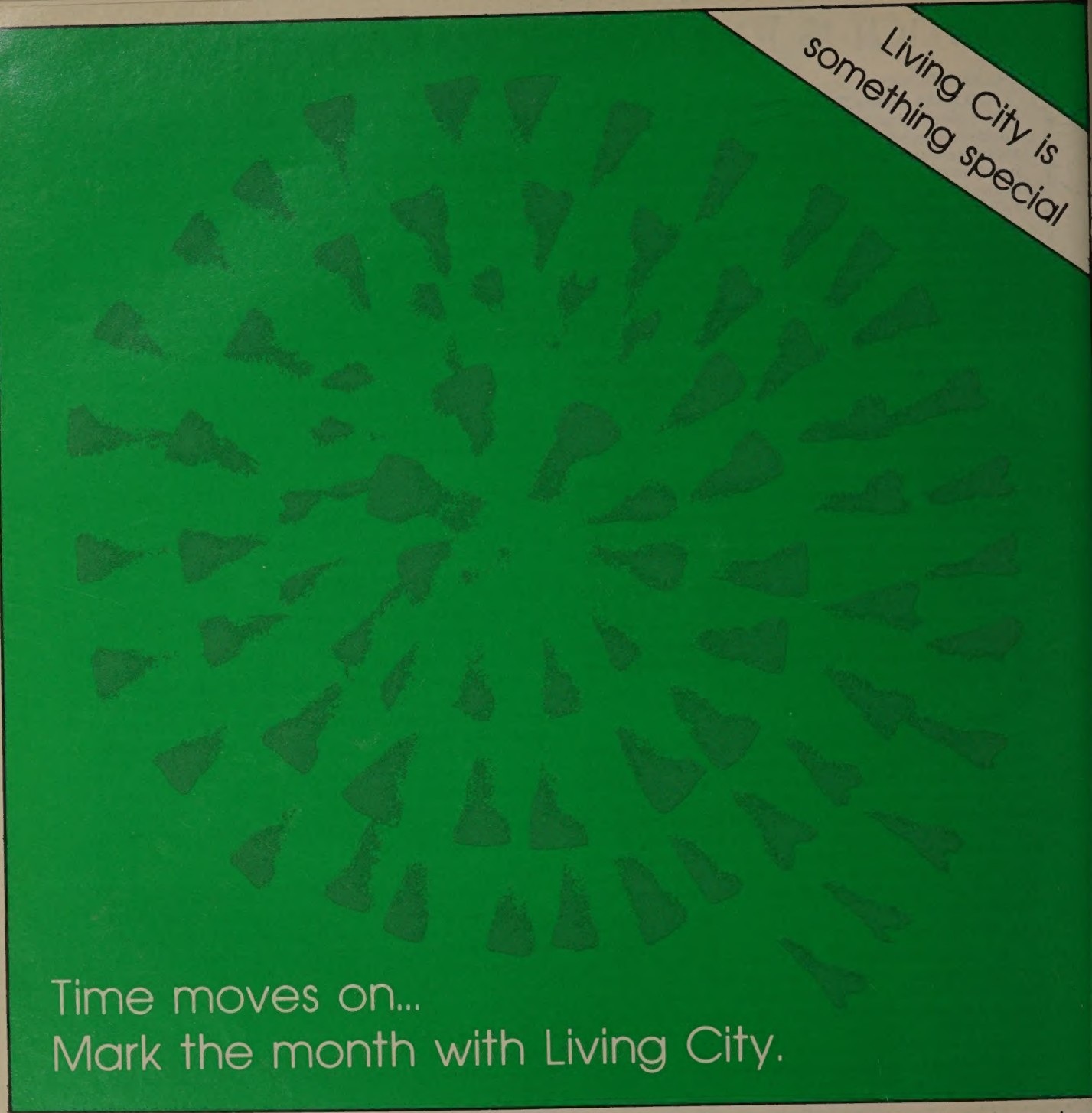

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